

HAMNET BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY 4 April 2004

HAMNET is the Official Emergency Communications network of the South African Radio League and provides emergency communication to local, regional and national authorities, when requested to do so.

NOTE THIS BULLETIN IS BEING SENT IN NORMAL E-MAIL FORMAT AND NOT BCC AS MANY PEOPLE COMPLAINED LAST MONTH THAT THEY DID NOT GET A COPY

THIS BULLETIN WAS COMPILED AND PREPARED BY FRANCOIS BOTHA ZS6BUU.

IN THE BULLETIN TODAY:-

RENEWED COMMITMENT TO HAMNET BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY APRIL AND ALL ITS ACTIVITIES A SUCCESSFUL COMBINED EFFORT POWER CUTS APRS SOME INTERESTING WEBSITES

1. RENEWED COMMITMENT TO HAMNET

I was informed last month, by the Department of Transport, that a grant has been allocated to HAMNET. It is not a substantial amount, but what is significant is the fact that HAMNET is now, more than ever, an acknowledged and integral part of the Department of Transport's resource as a team or unit when it comes to providing a service, namely emergency communication in times of need.

The Department will require a breakdown of where the money is going to be spent or where the money was spent in order to improve our service to them.

This is why I am making an appeal to all HAMNET members, to have a good look at yourself as a member, your availability in times of need and your commitment to the cause.

The time has come that we again ask all members (and that includes myself) to ensure that they are available and adequately equipped when the call is made to assist. I am aware that many of us are working people but that does not in any way hamper your personal commitment and availability.

I would also like to appeal to all Provincial Directors to have a good look at not only your personal commitment but also the commitment of the team under your control and to ensure that you regularly make contact with your team by way of meetings etc. I am fully aware that there are a few teams who are well prepared and fully operational.

This has now become essential in order to ensure that we can operate as an established emergency organisation and be available at a moments notice.

In due course, I will personally be in touch with each Provincial Director to ascertain their personal commitment and also where we can fully utilize the funds entrusted to us, to improve our capabilities.

2. HAMNET BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY

KZN Sunday morning at 07H00 on their local VHF repeaters with a relay on 7.070MHz

National Bulletin at 17H00 local on 145,700MHz, 10,130Mhz in the 30M band with a relay on 7.070Mhz in the 40M band.

The Gauteng North bulletin will follow immediately after the National Bulletin on 145,725MHz in the Pretoria area on Sundays.

North West Province have a club bulletin on Mondays, which includes a Hamnet segment at 19H00 local on 3,750Mhz in the 80M band as well as their local repeater on 145.737.5Mhz.

Hamnet Western Cape Province with a bulletin on Wednesdays at 20H30 local on 145:700MHz, relayed on 3,674MHz.

The HAMNET Bulletin is sent to all those of whom I have an e-mail address and also sent out on packet by Rudi, ZS6DX.

3. APRIL AND ALL ITS ACTIVITIES

The first quarter of this year is already history. The lazy month of April is upon us. Why do I call it the lazy month? Simply because there are so many public holidays in April and to crown it, this year we also have a “foregone conclusion” election on our hands.

It all starts with the closure of schools across the country from Friday 26 March onwards. The Easter Weekend follows from 9 to 12 April followed by the election on the 14th of April. We have to date not had any formal request to be on standby, but I feel it not inappropriate that we do spend some time behind the mike on Wednesday 14 April to relay any untoward bit of information that could be useful to the powers that be.

But let's come back to the Easter weekend. On Thursday, 9 April, it will be appreciated if we could monitor our usual emergency frequency on 7,070MHz in the 40metre band for traffic. Local 2 metre repeaters should also be monitored where possible. This year we will also have the added benefit of ZS4CD in Bloemfontein. This call is used by qualified amateur radio operators stationed at the defence force in Tempe. Since the move of John, ZS6AN from Pretoria to Bloemfontein, he has initiated the re-installment of the monitoring service that has the benefit of covering the whole of South Africa. I always knew that Bloemfontein, so centrally situated, has a distinct communication advantage, and John also saw the benefits of this site.

The country goes to the polls on Wednesday 14 April. Where possible, monitoring of all frequencies is advisable.

The 27th of April, albeit a Tuesday, may be turned into a long weekend. I somehow have my doubts that too many people will make use of this as the

schools have just re-opened and with the predicted price of petrol, I don't think there will be too much traffic on the road.

We have not heard if the Arrive Alive campaign is operational over the Easter weekend, but we will listen out.

4. A SUCCESSFUL COMBINED EFFORT

During the 2nd half of March, the combined efforts of the Maritime Mobile net, Hamnet and various other shipping frequencies, were responsible for tracking and getting an urgent message through to a yacht out in the Atlantic.

The yacht, SHOESTRING 3, built in Hout Bay, had departed Laaiplek on the west coast for St. Helena Island which formed part of a 2 year cruise for Peter Muzic and Sue Lyons from Canada.

Peter is an experienced yachtsman having done many Atlantic crossings. However, fate played a different hand when on Saturday 20 March, Cape Town Radio were informed to contact SHOESTRING 3 urgently as there had been a death in the family in Canada and Peter had to be contacted urgently.

Alistair, ZS5MU was contacted as well as Fred ZS5FM who ran with Andrew, a regular shipping net on various frequencies known as Perri-Perri and Easy Rider, to contact the yacht in order for Peter to phone home.

For a number of days, and switching to various frequencies known to the shipping fraternity and amateur radio operators, contact was eventually established and the yacht midway between the west coast and St. Helena, and a new course was immediately plotted to Walvis Bay in Namibia.

Although the ride was pretty rough at times, the wind was reasonably favourable for the yacht to make good progress to Walvis Bay and should have reached destination by Saturday 27 March. From there Peter was to fly to Cape Town and from there directly back to Canada.

By the time I heard from Andrew, ZR1SBM, our Provincial Director in Cape Town, I had also established from Alistair that the yacht had been contacted and was proceeding to Walvis Bay.

It turned out to be an excellent communications exercise from both our point of view and also the close relationship that exists between the amateur radio fraternity, particularly the Maritime Mobile Net, Hamnet and the various frequencies used by the yachting fraternity and Cape Town Radio ZSC.

Well done to all and a shot in the arm for Amateur Radio. A full article will be published in a later edition of Radio ZS, and I thank Andrew for his input.

5. ESCOM POWER CUTS

A major cause for concern was an item in both Sunday papers on Sunday 28 March of the possibility of power cuts by ESCOM this coming winter due to demand exceeding supply.

Now is the time to check those alternative power sources namely generators, batteries etc. to ensure that they are fully loaded, operational and available should we be hit by a power failure.

My greatest concern is the effect of power cuts to traffic, people stuck in elevators, food going bad in stores, supermarkets etc where no alternative power is available, and so on.

From our point of view, maintaining communication is of the utmost importance. As it is, in my shack, one radio is permanently connected to a battery and it would take but the changing of the coax leads to be back on the air.

Please be prepared for such an event. The reports indicate early morning and late afternoons are the most possible times of cuts.

6. APRS SOME INTERESTING WEBSITES

Automated Position Reporting System has been around for quite a while, but with new technology and it becoming a lot less expensive to build or purchase than a GPS Unit, the possibilities are endless when it comes to search & rescue.

On Saturday 21 March, during an open day at the NARC, Andy Coetzee, ZS6CEY gave us a very informative talk on this subject.

This bulletin is already a bit on the long side with result all I wish to give you are some very interesting web sites and we can discuss this at some later date.

www.byonics.com www.nstar.org www.eoss.org www.findu.com www.aprs.net
www.qsl.net/zs6oun

The last website is a map reference site.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY

On Sunday, March the 28th, Southern Brazil experienced its first ever hurricane in the South Atlantic. Winds exceeded 120 k/ph and reached speeds of up to 150k/ph when it hit the coast 840 kilometres south of Rio de Janeiro, causing damage to hundreds of homes and buildings and leaving the residents terrified.

Scientists at first disagreed but later acknowledged that no known hurricane as ever been recorded in Southern Brazil before.

An indication of how our planet s weather pattern is changing.

Thanks for Andrew Perrins, Provincial Director Western Cape for this insert.

DATES TO DIARISE

Sunday 11 April the Hamnet 40M contest and Sunday 18 April the Wolropark 100 cycle race in the East Rand. Please contact Keith ZS6AGF at 675-1604 if you can assist with communications on that day.

Bulletin ends.